

REMARKS

This submission is in response to the Official Action dated November 19, 2002. Applicants submit herewith a Petition for an extension of time with the appropriate fee. Claims 12-18 and 26 are pending and at issue.

Reconsideration of the above identified application, in view of the following remarks, is respectfully requested.

Information Disclosure Statement

With the amendment filed on November 1, 2002 (which was submitted by fax), applicants submitted under separate cover (by first class mail) a Supplemental Information Disclosure with copies of the references not yet considered by the Examiner. In the present action, the Examiner states that the references were not received. It appears that the supplemental IDS was delayed in the mail. The undersigned spoke with Examiner Tawfik on April 9, 2003 and learned that the references have since been located and are now in the file.

Applicants' Invention

The present invention is directed to a method of packaging a web. In the manufacture of products such as sanitary napkins, a relatively narrow but thick web or strip of generally absorbent material is supplied for conversion. The supply of such a narrow web presents transportation and handling difficulties. A spool of such material quickly attains a large diameter relative to its thickness, hence the

label "pancake" reels. Such spools are inherently unstable, and must be changed frequently during operation, because they cannot hold much material (see page 1, lines 11-18).

The present invention provides an improved method for packaging a narrow web that overcomes the difficulties described above. First, referring to Fig. 1, a wide web (1) from a master or "jumbo" roll, is slit into multiple narrower webs 2(a)-(e). The slitting can either be complete, as shown by slitter blades 6, or interrupted to form perforations as shown for example, in Fig. 5 of Shore. After the narrower webs are created, they are directed together to a "nip formed by first and second rotating reels" as required by claim 12. The narrower webs are then induced to "move with the first and second rotating reels a length of a predetermined rotational angle to provide folding" as required by claim 12, to provide folding of the narrower webs, by "holding the two or more narrower webs alternatively against surfaces of the first and second rotating reels to form adjacent stacks." An end of each stacked narrower web is then joined to an end of another stack such that a continuous whole is formed *"whose length corresponds to a combined length of the two or more narrower webs."* See claim 12.

Thus, a package is formed from two or more interconnected stacks of folded narrower web material. The package can be configured in a variety of sizes as desired and can pay out a continuous strip of material without the necessity of frequent reel changes. (See p. 2, lines 12-18.)

35 U.S.C. §103 Rejection

The Examiner has maintained the rejection of pending claims 12-18 and 26 under §103 as being unpatentable over Shore et al. in view of Gebhardt. The Examiner contends that Shore discloses folding two or more webs into superimposed layers by causing the webs to move with two rotating reels at a length of a predetermined angle to provide for folding. The Examiner further argues that Gebhardt discloses a method of packaging a web by directing the web to a nip formed by rotating reels and a mechanical gripper projection to interfold bags.

However, Shore does not disclose folding webs by causing them to move with rotating reels. Shore discloses that the web is extended vertically through a guide member which moves back and forth horizontally to lay the web into a vertically folded stack. Shore does not disclose that this guide member contains "rotating reels" as stated by the Examiner. The entire guide member shown in Shore *reciprocates* horizontally through angular limits. There is no disclosure of the use of *rotary* movement using rotating reels to fold the web as required by the present claims.

The Examiner continues to contend that device 56 of Shore satisfies the present claim limitation that the web be induced "to move with the first and second rotating reels a length of a predetermined rotational angle to provide folding of the two or more narrower webs of the slit web by holding the two or more narrower webs alternatively against surfaces of the first and second rotating reels to form adjacent stacks...". However, it is clear from Fig. 4 of Shore and the

corresponding text in the specification at 3:47-52 that this cannot be the case:

At the top of this conveyor the slab product extends downwardly through a combined guide member and wig-way device 56 that is continuously moved back and forth through angular limits as indicated by the arrows in Fig. 4

Even if the end of device 56 includes two rollers as the Examiner suggests, such roller would serve only as guide rollers and cannot fold the web as required by the present claims. The "wig-way" device swings back-and-forth in a reciprocating "wig-way" manner to lay down the web and create loops of material at each end of travel of the wig-way device. If the guide rollers of device 56 were actually inducing a fold in the material, the diameter of the rollers would be much too small to create a stack of folded material with the width shown in Fig. 4 (at least about five times too small based on the dimensions shown in the Figure).

Gebhardt discloses the use of rotating drums with gripping devices as part of a mechanism to interlock separate bags. These gripping devices interfold bags so that each bag is interlocked with a preceding and succeeding bag in a staggered manner. This method of folding/ results in an effect similar to a box of tissues whereas as one tissue is removed the next pops out of the box. Gebhardt does not disclose that the bags are joined together in any way. The staggered folded bags do not form a continuous connected web, as required by the present claims.

The Examiner now contends that while "Gebhardt does not disclose that the bags are joined together in any way ... Shore's reference clearly discloses

that the webs are joined together via web portions 18." This is true, but not relevant. Shore shows connections 18 between the side-by-side strips 16 (in the cross-direction) to provide a wide web including a plurality of connected strips 16. This disclosure of Shore does not cure the absence of suggestion in Gebhardt to provide a continuous web in the longitudinal (or machine) direction for folding using rotating reels as required by the present claims. In fact, the heavy "flexible, unvulcanized or 'green' rubber" of Shore (2:49-50) would not be suitable for use with the gripper and tucker finger rotary arrangement of Gebhardt (6:3-36), for providing interfolded, separate plastic bags. Thus, it is not the case that it would be obvious to combine the teachings of the two reference for "a better way of folding and achieving stronger fold lines" as contended by the Examiner.

A person of ordinary skill in the art would not have combined the teachings of Shore with the teachings of Gebhardt. Gebhardt does not teach folding a slit web of several narrower webs to form adjacent stacks of folded material. There is no teaching or suggestion that the mechanism of Gebhardt used for interlocking successive, separate plastic bags, be used for simultaneously folding the uninterrupted narrower webs to form a set of stacks of folded material.

Perhaps most importantly, neither Shore nor Gebhardt, taken separately or together would have taught or suggested to one of ordinary skill in the art to join together the ends of the narrower webs to form a continuous whole "whose length corresponds to a combined length of the two or more narrower webs" as required by the present claims.

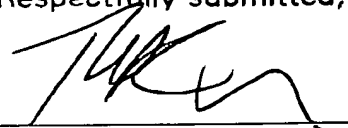
Applicants note that they have *not* argued that Gebhardt is non-analogous art as stated by the Examiner. Instead, applicants have explained that there is no teaching or suggestion by the two cited references taken alone or in combination to arrive at the presently claimed invention. For the foregoing reasons, applicants submit that the rejections of claims 12-18 and 26 under §103 has been overcome and thus request that these rejections be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above remarks, it is respectfully requested that the application be reconsidered and that all pending claims be allowed and the case passed to issue.

If there are any other issues remaining which the Examiner believes could be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,



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